

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 IGA-02 A-01 OPR-02 OC-05 CCO-00

OMB-01 FBO-02 CU-02 SY-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 ABF-01 FS-01 PC-01 /081 W
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R 061655Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8116

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0211

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: AFSP, PFOR, DM, US

SUBJ: BENIN GOVT GIVES NOTICE TO USG TO EVACUATE ITS CHANCERY

REF COTONOU 198,

SUMMARY: WE HAVE DISCUSSED BENIN GOVT'S NOTICE TO EVACUATE CHANCERY WITH OUR LANDLORD AND WITH DEPDIR OF PROTOCOL. AS PROTOCOL OFFICER UNABLE PROVIDE CLARIFICATION, HE UNDERTOOK TO ARRANGE APPOINTMENT FOR DCM TO DISCUSS MATTER WITH DIRGEN OF THE MINISTRY ON FEB 9. END SUMMARY

1. THIS MORNING 6 FEB, EMBOFFS MET WITH CHANCERY LANDLORD, GEN CHRISTOPHE SOGLO, WHO WAS AS SURPRISED AS WE WERE BY THE EVICTION NOTICE REPORTED REFTEL. SOGLO RECOMMENDED USG FIGHT BACK HARD ON ISSUE. HE DOES NOT BELIEVE BENIN GOVT HAS ANY PLAN TO RENOVATE AREA IN WHICH CHANCERY LOCATED, NOR DOES HE EXPECT GOVT TO EXPROPRIATE HIS PROPERTY. GEN SPECULATED ON TWO POSSIBLE MOTIVES FOR THE ORDER. FIRST IT MIGHT BE AIMED AGAINST HIM. PRESENT GOVT MAY BE JEALOUS OF HIS RELATIVE WEALTH AND WISH TO CUT OFF HIS SOURCE OF INCOME BY EVICTING HISTENANT. (EMBASSY DOES NOT GIVE CREDENCE TO THIS LINE OF REASONING). SECOND, GPRB DOES NOT LIKE IDEA THAT EMBASSY IS LOCATED WITHIN ONE BLOCK OF CAMP GUEZO AND WANTS TO

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MOVE US OUT AND INSTALL A COMMUNIST EMBASSY (PROBABLY THE

CHICOMS WHO COULD USE A WELL-ORGANIZED COMPLEX LIKE OURS). GENERAL, WHO HAS BEEN OUR LANDLORD SINCE WE ESTABLISHED RELATIONS WITH DAHOMEY IN 1961, DOES NOT WISH TO LOSE US AS HIS TENANT, ESPECIALLY IN FAVOR OF A COMMUNIST CLIENT. HE WENT TO FORMIN THIS AFTERNOON TO TAKE UP ISSUE WITH THE MINISTER.

2. DCM MET WITH PIERRE AGOSSOU, DEPDIR OF PROTOCOL (WHO INCIDENTIALLY LEAVES FOR ASSIGNMENT IN WASHINGTON MARCH 1). AGOSSOU, WHO DRAFTED NOTE, SAID IT WAS DONE ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE MIN OF INTERIOR, LT AZONHIHO (A COMMUNIST). AGOSSOU WAS UNABLE TO PROVIDE ANSWERS TO OUR MANY QUESTIONS, AND SUGGESTED THAT, AS HE WAS ONLY CARRYING OUT INSTRUCTIONS RELAYED BY FORNMIN DIRGEN, DCM MEET WITH THE LATTER. AGOSSOU SETTING UP APPOINTMENT FOR FEB 9.

3. COMMENT: IF DECISION TO FORCE US TO MOVE IS BASED ON DESIRE TO GIVE OUR CHANCERY TO A COMMUNIST GOVT OR ON PRETEXT THAT OUR CHANCERY IS TOO CLOSE TO A MILITARY CAMP, OR ALTERNATIVELY IF WE ASCERTAIN THAT THERE IS IN FACT NO GENERAL PLAN TO RENEW OR REDEDICATE THE WHOLE AREA TO A REASONABLE AND ESSENTIAL GOVT PURPOSE, EMBASSY URGES STRONG USG RESISTANCE. IN ANY CASE, THE SHORT NOTICE GIVEN IS OUTRAGEOUS AND THE COST TO THE USG WILL BE VERY SUBSTANTIAL.
ENGLE

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